NY PUBLIC LIBRARY THE BRANCH LIBRARIES
3 3333 12071 1136

D-CH

READING ROOM
STACKS

rare Case

j824-L Lamb 15513

READING ROOM

THE CENTRAL CHILDREN'S ROOM
DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER
20 WEST 53 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

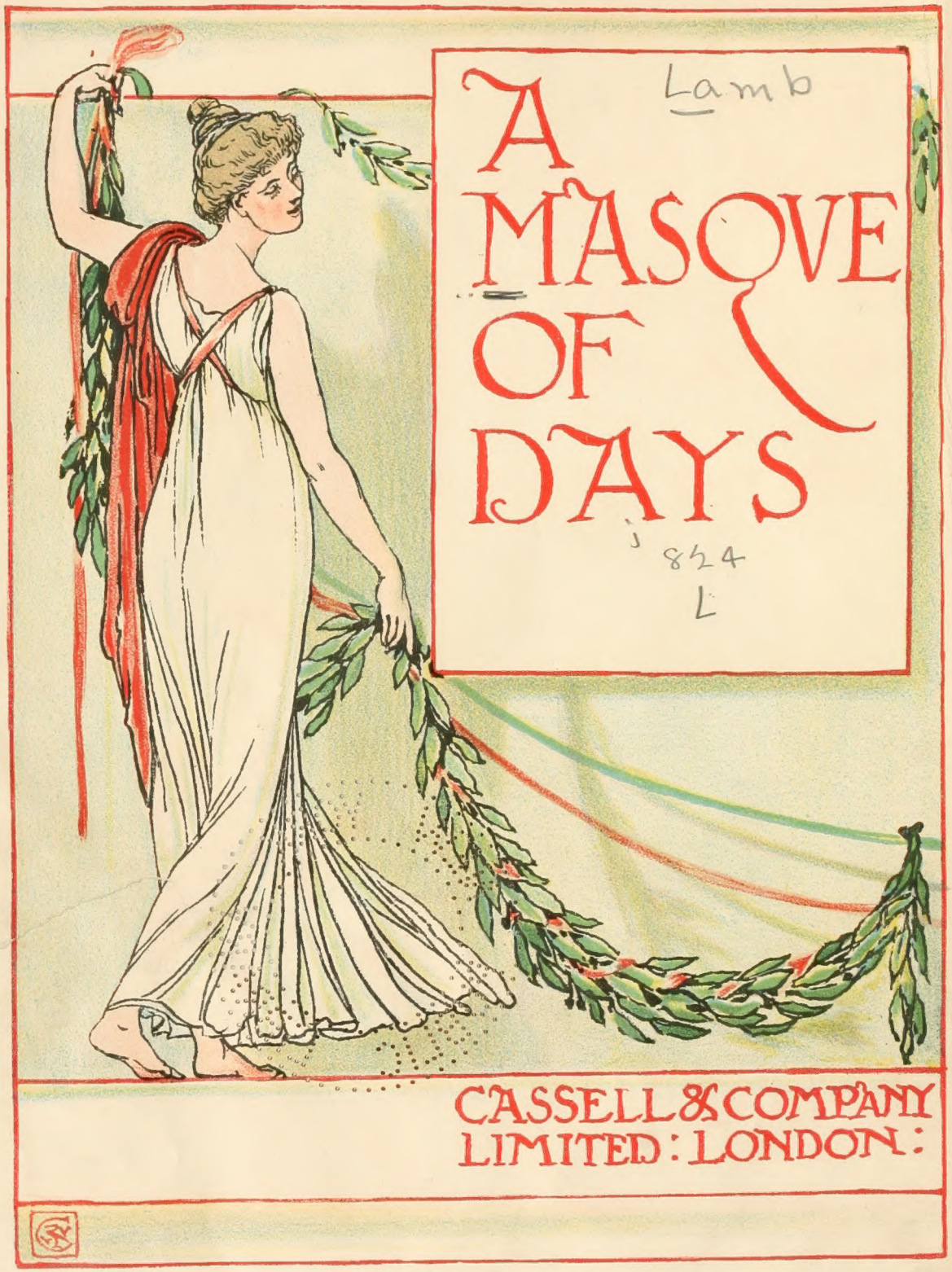
http://www.archive.org/details/masqueofdaysfrom00lamb

J 824 Lam b

J
824
L22

15513

A MASQUE OF DAYS



Lamb
J 824 L

FROM THE LAST ESSAYS OF ELIA: NEWLY DRESSED & DECORATED BY WALTER CRANE

PARIS, NEW YORK & MELBOURNE. 1901.

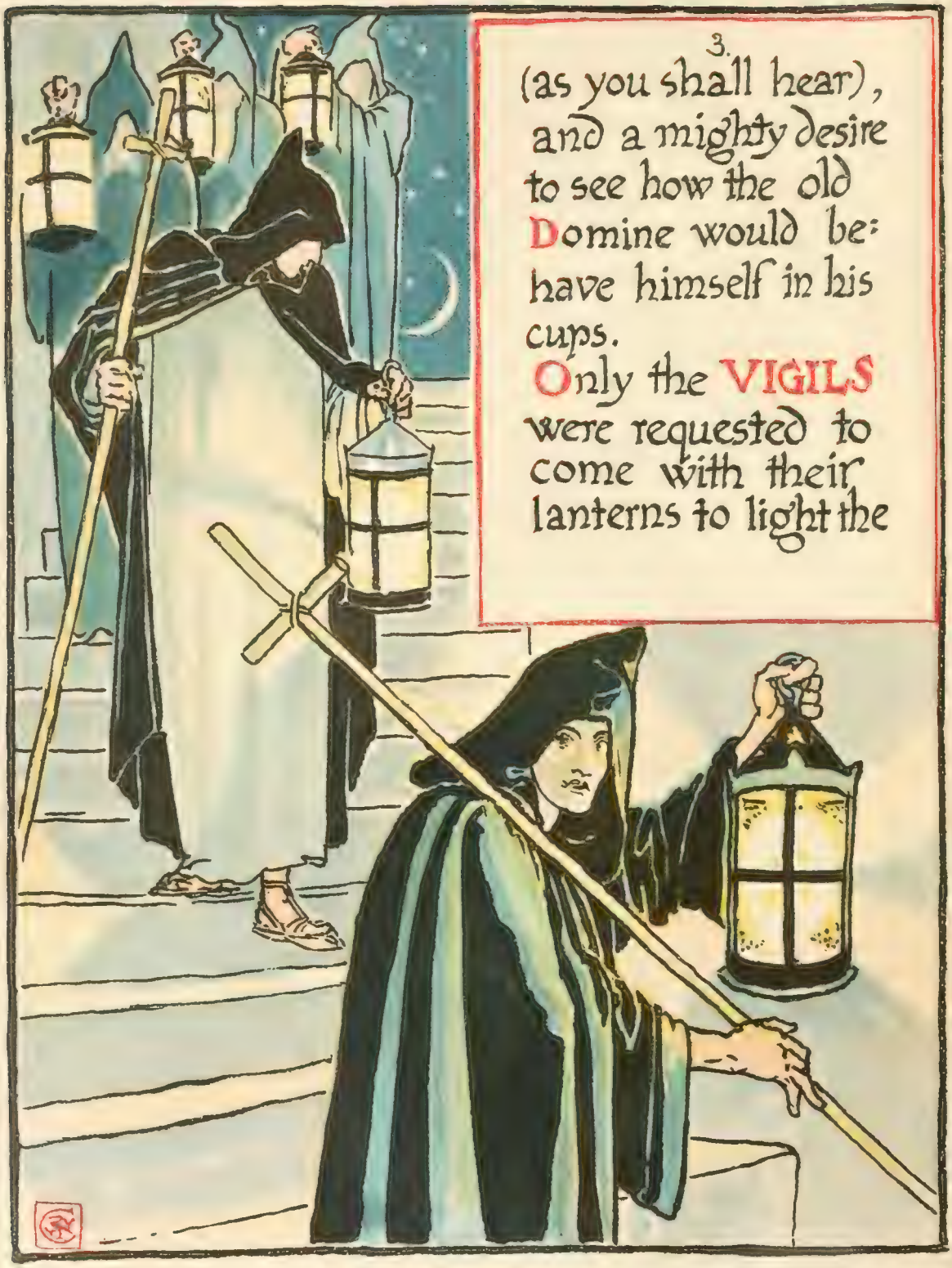
j824 L 15513

THE OLD YEAR being dead, and the NEW YEAR coming of age, wh: he does by Calendar Law, as soon as the breath is out of the old gentleman's body, nothing would serve the young spark but he must give a din: ner upon the occasion, to wh: all the Days in the year were invited. The Festivals, whom he deputed as his stewards, were mightily ta: ken with the notion. They

had been engaged time out of mind, they said, in providing mirth and good cheer for mortals below; and it was time they should have a taste of their own bounty. It was stiffly debated among them whether the Fasts should be admitted. Some said, the appearance of such lean, starved guests, with their mortified faces, would pervert the ends of the meeting. But the objection was overruled by Christmas Day who had a design upon Ash Wednesday

(as you shall hear), and a mighty desire to see how the old Domine would behave himself in his cups.

Only the VIGILS were requested to come with their lanterns to light the



4.

gentlefolks home at night. ✲ · ✲ · ✲ ·

All the Days came to their day. Covers were provided for three hundred and sixty-five guests at the principal table; with an occasional knife and fork at the side-board for the Twenty-Ninth of February.

I SHOULD have told you that cards of invitation had been issued. The carriers were THE HOURS twelve little, merry whirligig foot-pages, as you should desire to see, that went all round, and found

out the persons invited
well enough, with the
exception of Easter
Day, Shrove Tuesday,
and a few such Move-
ables, who had lately
shifted their quarters.

WELL, they all met at last, foul Days, fine Days, all sorts of Days, & and a rare din they made of it. There was nothing but, Hail! fellow Day, well met—brother Day—sister Day—only LADY DAY kept a little aloof and seemed some-

what scornful. Yet some said, TWELFTH DAY cut her out and out, for she came in a tiffany suit, white and gold, like a queen on a frost-cake, all roy-:al glittering, and Epiphanous.

The rest came, some in green, some in white — but old Lent and his fam: ily were not yet out of mourning

10

Rainy Days came in, dripping; and sun-shiny Days helped them to change their stockings

Wedding Day was there in his marriage finery, a little the worse for wear.

Pay Day came late, as he always does; and Dooms day sent word— he might be expected

April Fool (as my young lord's jester) took upon himself to marshal the guests, and wild work he made with it. It would have posed old Erra Pater to have found out any given Day in the year, to erect a scheme upon –

good Days, bad Days were so shuffled together, to the confounding of all sober horoscopy. He had stuck the Twenty-First of June next to the Twenty-Second of December, and the former looked like a Maypole siding a marrow-bone.

Ash Wednesday got wedged in (as was concerted) betwixt Christmas & Lord Mayor's Days. Lord! how he laid about him! Nothing but barons of beef & turkeys would go down with him to the great greasing & detriment of his new sackcloth bib & tucker. And still Christmas Day was at his elbow, plying him with the wassail-bowl,

till he roared, & hiccupp'd, & protested there was no faith in dried ling,* * * a sour, windy, acrimonious, censor-ious hy-po-crit-crit-critical mess & no dish for a gent-leman. Then he dipt his fist into the middle of the great custard that stood be-fore his left-hand neigh-bour, & daubed his hungry beard all over with it, till you would have taken him for the Last Day in December it so hung in icicles.

AT another part of the table, Shrove Tuesday was helping the Second of September to some cock broth, ——

which courtesy the
latter returned with
the delicate thigh
of a hen pheasant
—so there was no
love lost for that
matter.

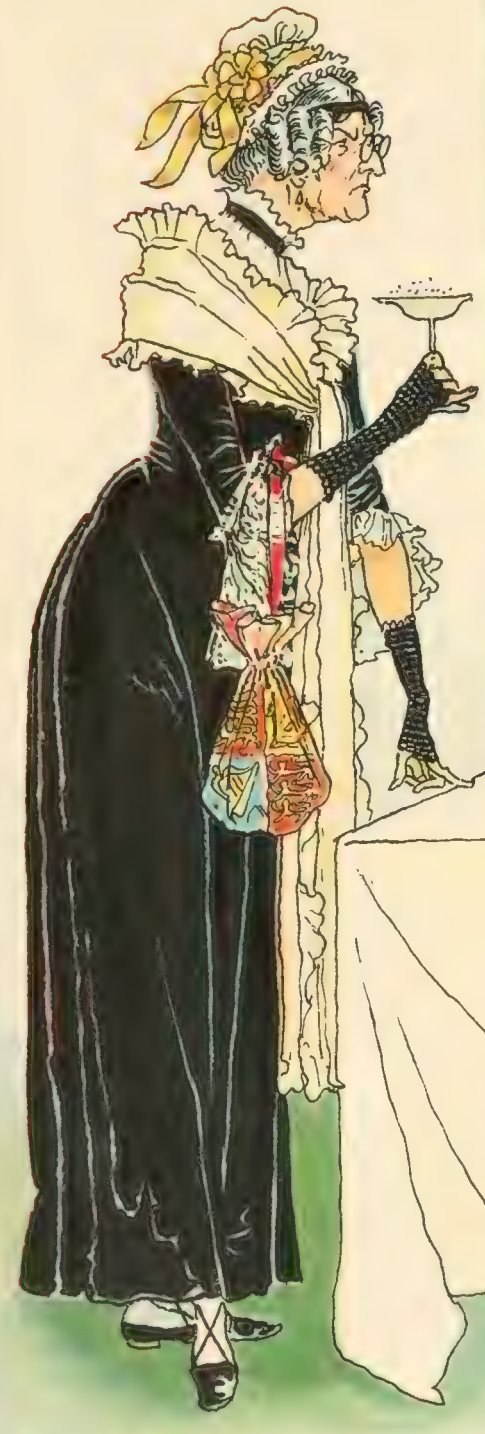
The Last of Lent was spunging upon Shrove-tide's pancakes; which April Fool perceiving, told him he did well, for pancakes were proper to a good fry-day.

In another part a hubbub arose about the Thirtieth of January, who, it seems, being a sour puritanic character, that

thought nobody's meat good or sanctified enough for him, had smuggled into the room a calf's head which he had had cooked at home for that purpose, thinking to feast thereon incontinently; but as it lay in the dish March Many weathers, who is a very fine lady, and subject to the meagrims, screamed

out there was a "human head in the platter," and raved about Herodias' daughter to that degree, that the obnoxious viand was obliged to be removed; nor did she recover her stomach till she

had gulped down a Restorative, confected of Oak Apple, which the merry Twenty-Ninth of May always carries about with him for that purpose.



The King's health being called for after this, a notable dispute arose between the 12th of August (a zealous old Whig gentlewoman, and the Twenty Third of April (a new-fangled la-dy of the Tory stamp) as to which of them should have the honour to propose it.

24

August grew hot upon the matter, affirming time out of mind the prescriptive right to have lain with her, till her rival basely supplanted her;

* * * * *

April Fool being made mediator, confirmed the right in the strongest form of words to the appellant, but decided for peace' sake that the exercise of it should remain with the present possessor.

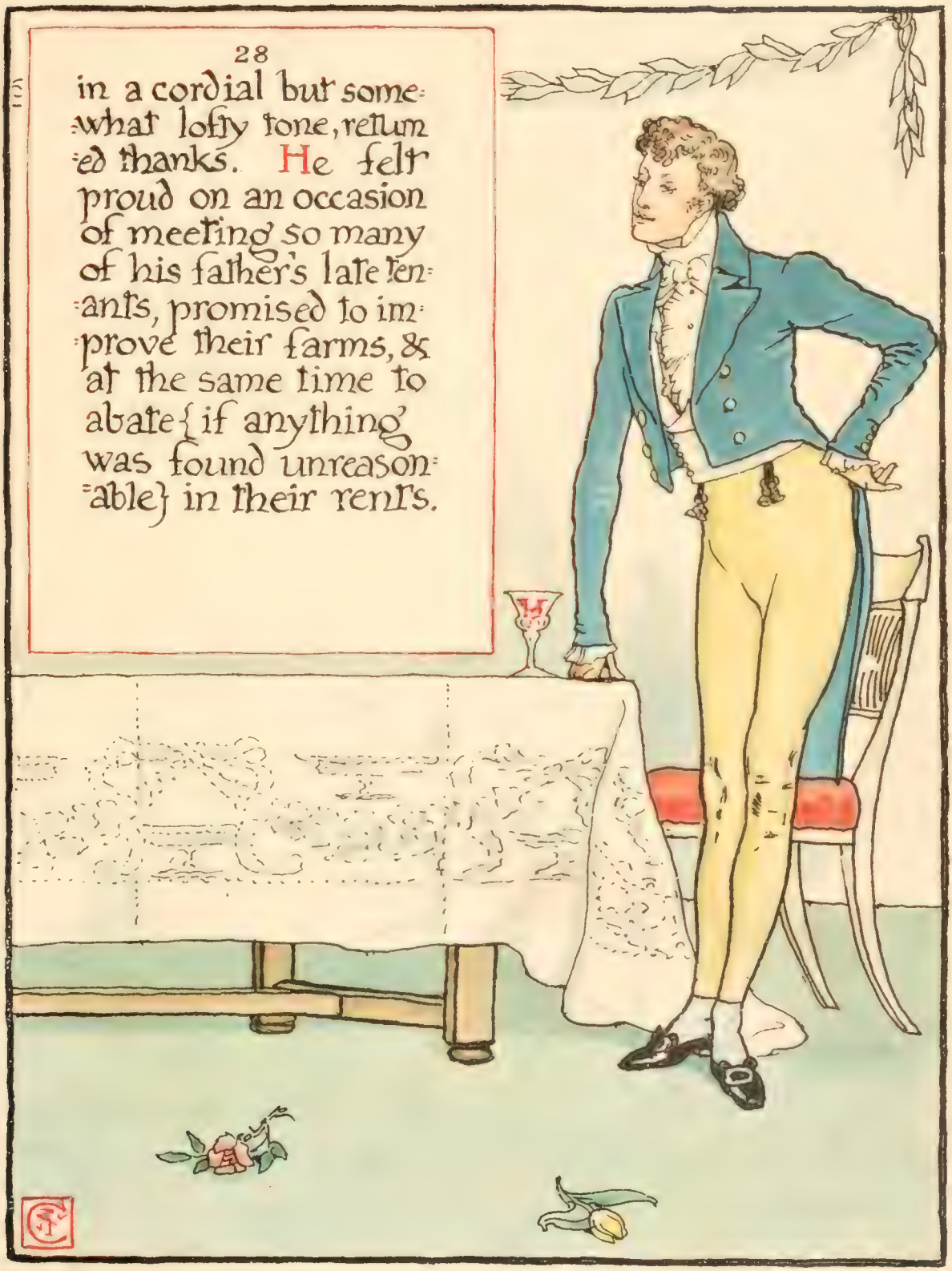
* * * * *

It beginning to grow a little duskish, Candlemas lustily bawled out for lights which was opposed by all the Days, who protested against burning

daylight. Then
fair water was hand-
-ed round in silver
ewers, and the same
lady was observed
to take an unusual
time in washing her-
-self.

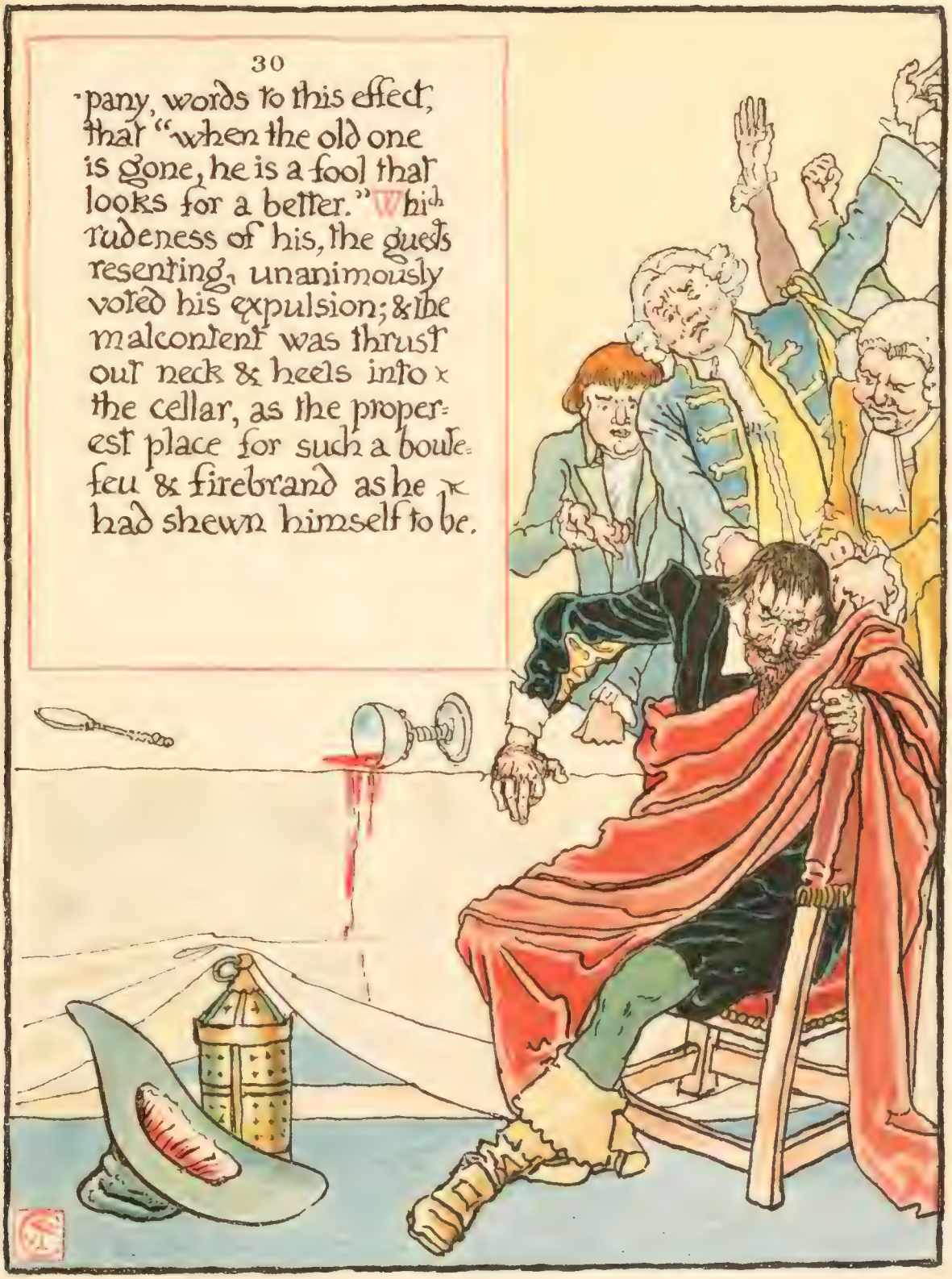
May-Day, with that sweetness which is peculiar to her, in a neat speech proposing the ☙ health of the founder, crowned her goblet (and by her example the rest of the company) with garlands. ☙☙ This being done, the lordly ☙ New Year from the upper end of the table,

in a cordial but some-
what lofty tone, return
-ed thanks. He felt
proud on an occasion
of meeting so many
of his father's late ten-
-ants, promised to im-
prove their farms, &
at the same time to
abate {if anything
was found unreason-
-able} in their rents.



At the mention of this & the Four Quarter Days involuntarily looked at each other, & smiled; April Fool whistled to an old tune of "New Brooms" & a surly old rebel at the further end of the Table {who was discovered to be no other than the Fifth of & November} muttered out distinctly enough to be heard by the whole com=

pany, words to this effect, that "when the old one is gone, he is a fool that looks for a better." Which rudeness of his, the guests resenting, unanimously voted his expulsion; & the malcontent was thrust out neck & heels into the cellar, as the properest place for such a boute-feu & firebrand as he had shewn himself to be.



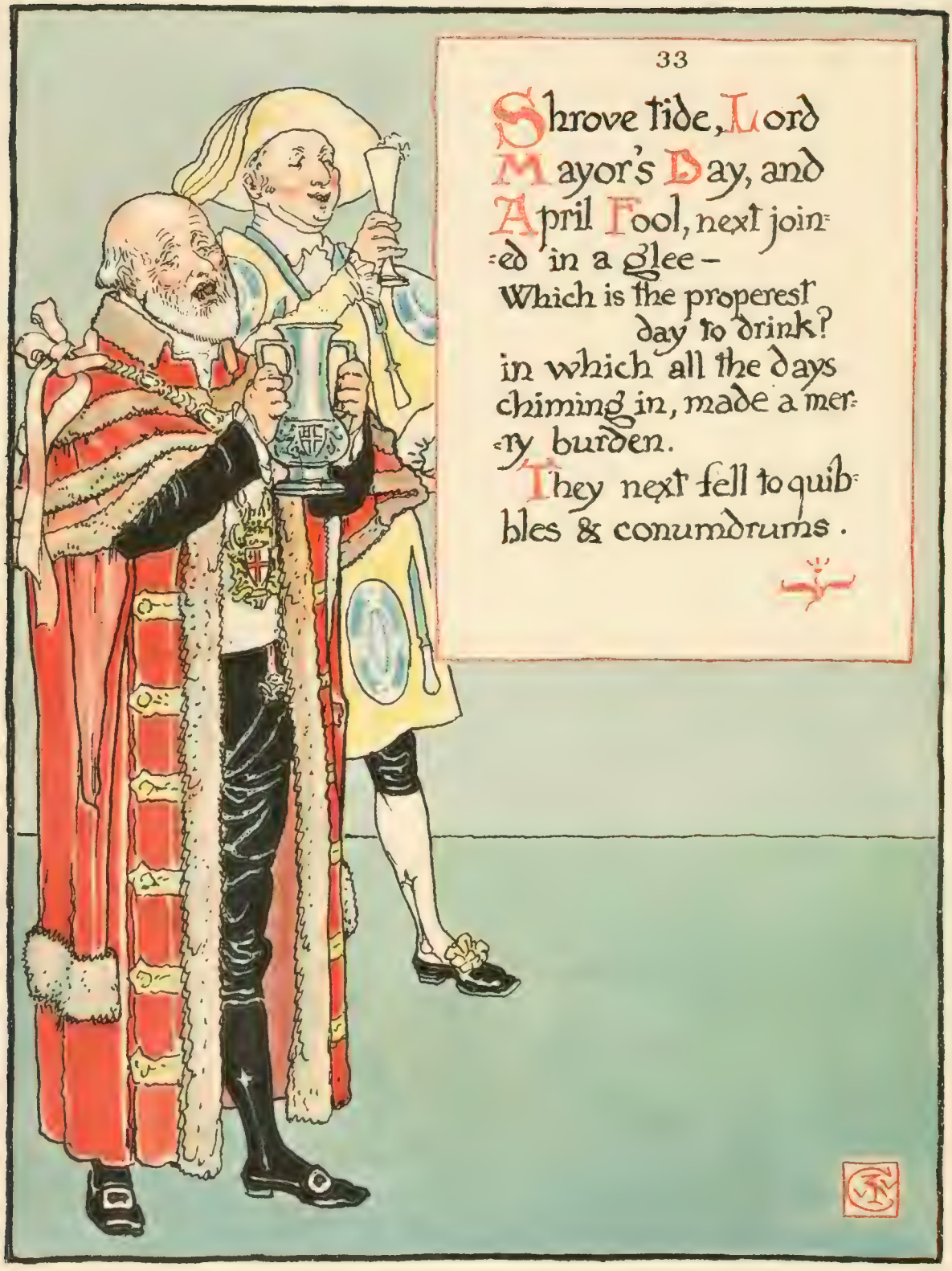
Order being restored— the young lord {who, to say truth, had been a little ruffled & put beside his oratory} in as few, & yet as obliging words as possible, assured them of entire welcome; &, with a graceful turn, singling out poor Twenty-Ninth of February, that had sate all this while mumchance at the sideboard, begged to couple his health with that of the good company before him — which he drank accordingly; observing, that he had not seen his honest face any time these four years — with a number of endearing

April Fool swore they had exchanged conditions; but Good Friday was observed to look extremely grave; &

expressions besides. At the same time, removing the solitary Day from the forlorn seat which had been assigned to him, he stationed him at his own board, somewhere between the Greek Calends & Latter Lammas.

Ash Wednesday, being now called upon for a song, with his eyes fast stuck in his head, & as well as the Canary he had swallowed would give him leave, struck up a Carol, which Christmas Day & had taught him for the nonce; & was followed by the latter, who gave "Miserere" in fine style, hitting off the mumping notes & lengthened drawl of Old Mortification with infinite humour.

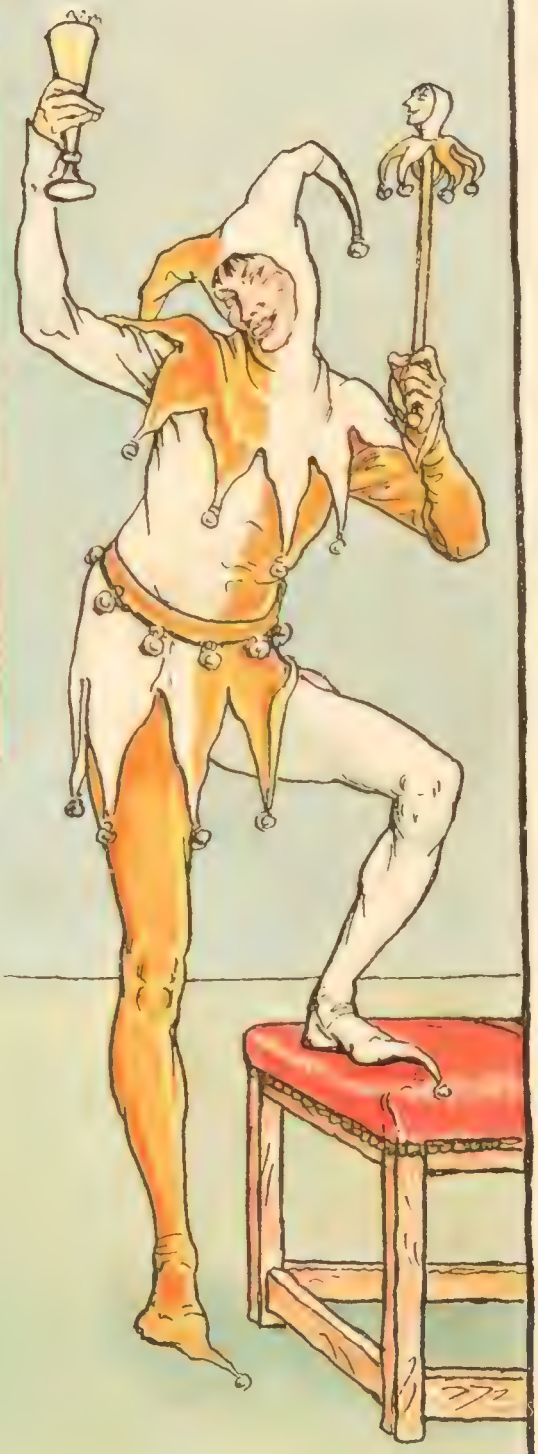
Sunday held her fan before her face, that she might not be seen to smile.



Shrove tide, Lord Mayor's Day, and April Fool, next join-ed in a glee – Which is the properest day to drink? in which all the days chiming in, made a mer-ry burden.

They next fell to quib-bles & conundrums.

The question being proposed, who had the greatest number of followers – the Quarter Days said, there could be no question as to that; for they had all the creditors in the world dogging their heels. But April Fool gave it in favour of the Forty Days before Easter; because the debtors in all cases outnumbered the creditors, & they kept *lent* all the year round.



All this while Valentine's Day kept courting pretty May, who sate next him, slipping amorous billets-doux un=

der the table, till the Dog Days {who are naturally of a warm constitution} began to bark and rage exceedingly.

April Fool, who likes a bit of sport above measure, & had some pretensions to the lady besides as being but a cousin once removed, - clapped & hallood them on; and as fast as their indignation cooled those mad wags, the Ember Days, were at it with their bellows to blow it into a flame; & all was in a ferment: till old Madame Septuagesima {who boasts herself the Mother of the Days} wisely diverted the conversation with a tedious

tale of the lovers which she could reckon when she was young; & of one Master Rogation Day in particular, who was for ever putting the question to her; & but she kept him at a distance, as the chronicle wd: tell - by which I apprehend she meant the Almanack. Then she rambled on to the Days that were gone, the good old Days, & so to the Days & before the Flood - which plainly showed her old head to be little better than crazed & doited.

Day being ended, the Days called for their cloaks & great-coats & took their leaves. Lord Mayors Day went off in a mist as usual; Shortest Day in a deep black Fog, that wrapt the little gentleman all round like a hedgehog. Two Vigils - so watchmen are called in heaven - saw Christmas Day safe home - they had been used to the business before. Another Vigil - a stout, sturdy, patrole, called the Eve of St Christopher -

seeing Ash Wednesday in a condition little better than he should be – e'en whipt him over his shoulders, pick-a-back fashion, & Old Mortification went floating home singing – "On the bat's back do I fly," & a number of old snatches besides, between drunk & sober; but very few Eves or Penitentiaries (you may believe me) were among them. Longest Day set off westward in beautiful crimson & gold – the rest, some in one fashion, some in another; but Valentine & pretty May took their departure together

in one of the prettiest silvery twilights a Lover's Day could wish to set in.

FINIS

15513

FINIS